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Chacko, Harsha E. PhD and Bordelon, Bridget M. PhD, "CREATING A METHODOLOGY TO EVALUATE THE PERFORMANCE OF STATE PARKS" (2016). *Travel and Tourism Research Association: Advancing Tourism Research Globally*. 44. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/ttra/2007/Presented_Papers/44

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CREATING A METHODOLOGY TO EVALUATE THE PERFORMANCE OF STATE PARKS

TTRA 2007 Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

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National and state parks in the United States play important roles in generating demand for travel and tourism. According to a recent study by the Travel Industry Association of America, U.S. travelers generated 87 million person-trips that had a visit to a state or national park (TIA, 2004). The purpose of this paper is to develop a state park evaluation model that takes into account economic and non-economic measures of performance of the entire portfolio of parks administered by a state. A model was developed to examine the performance of state parks in Louisiana with overnight facilities and is based on the Boston Consulting Group's (BCG) Advantage Matrix and the menu analysis model (Kasavana, Smith & Schmidgall, 2002). Visitor spending, numbers of visitors, performance, and direct operating expenditures were tabulated for 18 parks. The results of the evaluation of visitor experiences and satisfaction were compared with TIA's national park survey data and were used as a benchmark for further evaluation of specific park performance. When considering the significance of state parks, it is essential to use appropriate measures of performance evaluation. This study moves beyond the traditional approach of economic impact analysis and incorporates economic and non-economic measures of performance of the entire portfolio of parks administered by a state. The model presented in this paper provides a valuable tool for administrators of state parks as they make decisions about evaluation of performance and allocation of resources.